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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

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COUNTRY: Czechoslovakia

DATE: 5 March 1959

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Western Propaganda in Czechoslovakia:

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Listening to VOA and Other Western Stations

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[Redacted]

Opinions About VOA and Other Western Broadcasts

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On the occasions when interference was either weak or temporarily inactive, and he could listen to VOA, [Redacted] tried to tune in the regularly scheduled political commentaries. When the VOA signal was jammed, [Redacted]

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[Redacted] Since Bruce Lockhart was known to all intelligent Czechs as an old friend of Benes and Masaryk, [Redacted]

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[Redacted] made every effort to listen to his commentaries every Friday evening from BBC in London. In replying to questions as to whether he disliked particularly any portion of the VOA broadcasts [Redacted] able to hear from time to time.

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[Redacted] once a good audible signal was received the listeners were inclined to accept everything they heard in Czech, irrespective of what it was.

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[Redacted]

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[Redacted] VOA broadcasts to Czechoslovakia could be improved by making them different from the political fare which the native Czechoslovak listeners hear from their own native stations. All Czechoslovak programs are filled with incessant praise of the party achievements, norm fulfillments,

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progress of collectivization and success attained in the implementation of various plans. [redacted] people are fed up with this fare, [redacted] if, instead of taking issue with this communist material the VOA emphasized non-political news it would find a receptive audience within the country. [redacted] information about the life in the West, purchasing power of workers' wages, standards of living of people in various occupations, and related subjects would prove to be very interesting. [redacted]

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[redacted] such subjects widely commented upon when letters from the United States to families in Czechoslovakia were passed around to be read by friends. [redacted] some of his friends, after reading such letters, calculated that whereas a worker in the United States had to work two days to pay for a trip that was the U.S. equivalent of Prague to Paris, the comparable Czechoslovak worker had to work for almost a month (Kcs. 800) to pay for a four-day visit to the relatively nearby city of Budapest. By emphasizing that the U.S. worker can make such trips without restrictions, each of the Czechoslovak listeners would feel so much more acutely present difficulties encountered in obtaining documents to go abroad. To further illustrate the high cost of vacations outside government or institution-sponsored channels, [redacted] paid Kcs. 2,500 for a two-week vacation in the mountains. They had to save money for six months to pay their expenses. Their quarters were in a primitive farm house which possessed no comforts, and they ate peasant meals. Through VOA broadcasts the Czechoslovak listener should be given a true picture of how the average U.S. laborer, technician, petty government official or businessman spends his vacation.

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Another important facet of everyday life which is a source of concern to nearly every listener is the problem of feeding, clothing and educating the family. To purchase an automobile under present circumstances is beyond the reach of all but very few. [redacted] the following prices to prove point: the cheapest Renault costs Kcs. 22,000, while a Spartak can be purchased for Kcs. 28,000. It would take nine months of [redacted] full pay as a chief engineer and technical director of a synthetic fiber plant to purchase such a car, while a worker would have to devote two year's pay in order to buy a car. [redacted] by pointing up such contrasts between the low wages paid by the "socialist" state and those received by the workers in the West, the broadcasts would discourage Czechoslovak workers' apathy and tacit acquiescence to communist control. [redacted] VOA need not resort to the use of Goebbels' methods to convey ideas to Czechoslovaks. In his opinion, as soon as the average listener is given unadulterated facts he is intelligent enough to draw his own conclusions.

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Reception and Jamming

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Under the schedule of working hours in effect [redacted] about 80% of the workers had to arise sufficiently early so as to start work at 6:00 a.m. In the larger cities the various institutions and factories commenced operations at 7:30 a.m. [redacted]

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[redacted] early morning broadcasts from 5:15 to 7:00 a.m. could find a receptive early morning audience, broadcasts from 8:00 p.m. to 10:00 p.m. could be used to reach most listeners at the end of the day. Only those who do not work are able to stay up regularly after 10:00 p.m. On rare occasions when [redacted] listened after midnight, [redacted] could receive news in Czech without interference, [redacted] only an insignificant number of persons listened at this late hour. Heaviest jamming of programs was effected during the past early morning and early evening listening hours.

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Despite the fact that jamming was intense during the hours of heaviest listening [redacted] during visits to his father's home in Moravia that this was not true in other areas. In smaller towns and villages the interference was ineffective and all western stations could be heard clearly. His father listened to Czech programs from abroad regularly at Skripov (30 km. west of Prostějov) on his 1948 metal Kongres receiver. [redacted] radio reception in this locality is particularly good because the village of Skripov is situated on a plateau far from large cities.

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Types of Individuals Who Listened to Foreign Stations

Even though there was always considerable conversation among the natives of [redacted] on the subject of foreign broadcasts, no specific stations were ever mentioned. Since group listening was frowned upon by the local authorities, two or more listeners always took precautionary measures so as not to repeat identical items of information when they spoke of what they heard. Some of this fear grew out of distrust of Sudeten Germans, many of whom could not be differentiated from the native Czechoslovaks. Since these Germans listened to foreign broadcasts in German, they too distrusted their Czechoslovak neighbors; consequently, in any conversation reference was usually made to news from a "foreign station." Because of this practice, [redacted]

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[redacted] about specific foreign broadcasting stations. Consequently he was not in a position to learn what his countrymen really thought of VOA broadcasts. Among the stations mentioned from time to time was RFE, which was regarded as disseminating "pressure propaganda."

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About 80% of the population were workers. Of this group about one third were either Sudeten Germans or pro-Germans in sentiment. The remainder were a mixture of indigenous elements as well as workers who came from various parts of the country. The remaining 20% were intellectuals, technicians, enterprise officials and professional men. [redacted] 70% of the population in the [redacted] area owned radio sets.

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Since most of the people listened to various foreign broadcasts, news heard from abroad was always the subject of conversation among friends and acquaintances. The only difference between the various items heard was that the most interesting news was the subject of conversation for much longer periods of time than dull news. On occasion he discussed foreign programs with various Communist Party

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medium. The opportunists always referred to such foreign broadcasts with confidence, while the loyal communists were critical of what they heard and were always ready to point out the flaws in Western broadcasts.

On the basis of numerous conversations with workers and administrative personnel [redacted] the number of listeners (both VOA and other foreign broadcasts) varied with international developments. [redacted] During October-November 1956 all radio set owners were tuned to foreign broadcasts, during periods of lessened tension only about 20 to 25% listened every few days. When an international crisis like that involving the Soviet notes about Berlin appears in the news, the number of regular listeners increases to about 40% of the set owners. As the situation becomes more serious the audience increases. The source believes that since these listeners seek news in the Czech or Slovak languages they naturally tune in VOA programs, provided, of course, that the hours of transmission can be fitted into their programs of daily activities.

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[redacted] the average Western news item reached the Czechoslovak newspapers in three days and it was usually printed in such abbreviated form that it was practically useless. [redacted] complete coverage of the various Western news items soon after they were reported, so he depended upon foreign broadcasts. Women, on the other hand, sought in such foreign broadcasts those items which they could never find in the domestic Czechoslovak press: human interest stories, facts about film stars and other celebrities, and some of the romance which was lacking in their drab communist environment.

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Attitudes of Czechoslovaks: Intellectuals

[redacted] most of the communist propaganda in Czechoslovakia dealing with the rearming of [redacted] is intended to stimulate the average Czech's fear of a renewed [redacted] attack against his country. On the other hand, the professional men and the intellectuals look beyond the immediate aim of the communist [redacted] campaign, and regard a possible union of the two Germanys as their country's only hope for the future.

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that a year or two ago when the Rapacki Plan was being pushed by the Soviet Union, the Czechoslovak intellectual looked to a neutral zone in Central Europe as a means of gaining a certain amount of freedom. Today there is hope that intensification of the campaign for the settlement of the Berlin question may lead to an eventual union of the two Germanys; this union, many Czechoslovakians hope, will form the nucleus of a federated neutral central European state which a portion of present day Czechoslovakia could join. Because of the political changes which the Czechoslovak people suffered since 1938, [redacted]

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they have lost their nationalistic approach to membership in such an Eastern European federation. Many of the engineers and intellectuals with whom he discussed the subject demonstrated a willingness to have the border of [redacted] set as a line of demarcation separating the neutral federation from the area of Soviet influence which would include Slovakia. The neutral bloc could include Austria, Bohemia, Moravia, Yugoslavia and all of Germany. In the

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the average Czech respects the [redacted] for being good organizers and hard workers, and the only persons within Czechoslovakia who succumb to communist [redacted] propaganda are the less educated elements, those who have enriched themselves with loot taken from the departing Sudeten populace or are guilty of wrong doing against these people, or are chauvinists.

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[redacted] under communism, both in Poland and in Hungary, the people will not remain quiet indefinitely. Among Czechoslovak intellectuals there is a belief that eventually there will be either serious unrest or a further revolt in both of these satellites.

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[redacted] the Hungarian revolt was planned, and the October 1956 events in Poland occurred because the communists were unable to maintain control over their members who got out of hand. [redacted] the average Czech is convinced that the post-October 1956 situation in Poland somewhat resembles that which prevails in Czechoslovakia insofar as attitude towards the communists is concerned; this may be summarized in his assertion that "no nation in the world could love communism after being subjected to it for over ten years."

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In discussing the concept of European federation, [redacted] the dominant thought among all intelligent Czechoslovaks today is that no one wants war despite the fact that one frequently hears statements like "Better war than this life under communism." The idea of a European federation persists because so many of the intellectuals continue to believe that the Soviet Union must eventually retreat from portions of Czechoslovakia and certain contiguous areas. The Soviet system, in the opinion of many, can only survive in "medieval cultures" but it cannot flourish in areas of Europe where Western culture is dominant.

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[redacted] among the Czechs there was firm belief that even within the Soviet Union communism had lost considerable ground and Khrushchev was regarded as carrying out only about 10% of Lenin's concepts. Similarly, [redacted] the belief prevails in Czechoslovakia that Gottwald had considerably more support from loyal communists and was more orthodox than Zapotocky. In turn, Zapotocky had greater prestige than the present KSC secretary, Novotny, who is regarded as being a "zero." This gradual decline in communist orthodoxy and prestige, is [redacted] a sign of decreasing Communist Party (i.e. Soviet) prestige. As long as communism continues to lose some of its dynamic qualities and the hope continues to exist among Czechoslovak intellectuals that Soviet domination of their country will eventually come to an end, the idea of an Eastern European federation will gain support.

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[redacted] in his discussion of [redacted] militarism, the educated Czech respects the [redacted] but does not fear him and is willing to accept the former aggressor as a partner in a federation from which even the Slovak may be excluded.

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[redacted] who lived in Slovakia for two years, alleges that the Czechs and Slovaks have no love for each other. On many occasions he heard the Slovaks remind their Bohemian countrymen that the 1948 communist election victory in Czech and Moravian lands was marked with party defeat at the polls in Slovakia. Even though the average Czech is inclined to explain the takeover of their country by the communists as being inevitable, he nevertheless counters these Slovak allegations with a charge that they are ^{never} able to forget their brief moment

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of existence as a separate puppet state under Hitler. [redacted] 25X1
with such attitudes continuing to the present day it is not surprising that a
certain amount of misunderstanding exists. [redacted] the Slovaks in 1939 25X1
are exactly where they were forty years ago when they looked for independence as
a nation after World War I. They appear to be dissatisfied even though they have
"their own duplicate government in Bratislava" with a set of ministries and
commissions which resemble those in Prague. In summarizing the attitude of the
Slovak toward his Czech countryman, [redacted] the Slovak regards 25X1
the Czech in the same manner "that a hunchback looks upon a normal man."

[redacted] the average Czech intellectual has developed the 25X1
feeling that his nation can do without the Slovak, whom he regards as a poorer
relative and frequently refers to as a "gypsy." Despite the fact that the
atmosphere and the way of life in Slovakia is so different that few Czech
[redacted] would like to reside permanently in the area of their own politics, 25X1
[redacted] as a result of the changes effected since the communist
take-over in 1948, Czech engineers find it somewhat easier to live and work in
Slovakia.

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